



Operation RIO Update

25 July 2003

The Supertanker Abqaiq is being loaded at the Mina Al-Bakr Terminal in the Persian Gulf
US Navy Photo

An update for all SWD employees and Operation RIO volunteers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mission Update: South Rumalia GOSPS 1Q and 4J are back on line. Exporting oil has increased production levels. In spite of the continued looting and sabotage of the electrical and crude oil infrastructure that are exacerbating oil production, production is still increasing. Importing of petroleum products to augment those produced for internal consumption continues. The plan to establish a permanent Southern Base Camp nearer to the Southern Oil Company has been submitted for approval. Once approved, construction may begin. The anticipated schedule is for RIO personnel to move out of Camp Commando into the facilities in the October-November time frame.

Scheduled to Deploy 27 July: Cecil “Mike” McClenen, Galveston; Alan Dooley, St. Louis; Bobby Smith, Little Rock; Jim McKinney, Fort Worth; Everett Laney, Tulsa.

Scheduled to Return:

28 July: **Thomas Baksa**, Huntsville Center. 30 July: **BG Robert Crear**, Southwestern Division (only for two weeks). 2 Aug: **LTC Keith Martin**, Huntsville; **MAJ Ken Spain**, Southwestern Division; **Michael Gooding**, Huntsville; **Margaret Higginbotham**, Fort Worth; **Billie Rhone**, Fort Worth. 4 Aug: **CPT John Connor**, Tulsa; **Thomas McGill**, ERDC-Vicksburg. 5 Aug: **Jim Fields**, Southwestern Division. 9 Aug: **Eileen Grant**, Little Rock.



Corps unexploded ordnance supervisor, **Jim Walker**, is shown with a cache of 40 Surface-to-Air Seven (SA-7) missiles located in Iraq's Southern Oil Field.



14 Surface-to-Air Six (SA-6) missiles are detonated by Team Rio's unexploded ordinance contractor USA Environmental. Photo by Bob Crownover, USA Environmental.

CRC Information: by Russell Holeman

Here are some comments about my experience at the Ft. Bliss CRC.

PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT

- * Get as many shots done as possible
- * Get your smallpox vaccination (If you have not had one within the last 10 years.)
- * Don't worry about getting dental checkup or pantograph. They will only accept this if it has been accomplished by a military dentist. (The dental screening at Ft. Bliss went quick. They took care of any category 3 dental needs before employees deployed.)
- * CRC would like to see test results on the HIV test. (They accepted the one that I received from Concentra, but they want something with numbers on it.)
- * It is good to confirm your eyeglasses prescription.
- * CAC cards should be prepared with the Geneva Convention Information.
- * Pack adequate clothing for the week at CRC. Civilians will not wear uniforms until deployed.
- * Bring several padlocks to CRC. You will probably want to lock up each of the 2 to 3 duffel bags. These locks can also be used on the plastic storage containers available at the CRC for items you want to secure.
- * Provide information to employees concerning their assignment and who they will be replacing.

TRAVEL

- * Try to get your orders at least a week ahead of time.
- * Schedule flights to arrive at CRC between 1200 and 1600. Most of the activity gets started around 1630.
- * Keep your luggage to the minimum amount necessary. You will have to carry this around and up stairs at CRC. Plus you will have the duffel bags that you will take with you from CRC.
- * Some individuals brought plastic storage lockers for their stuff. These are good but you must carry them up one or two flights of stairs.

AT CRC

- * **Be PATIENT, Be FLEXIBLE** Plans and schedules will probably change throughout the day.
- * GS-12 and above are authorized to stay at the Fort Bliss Inn instead of at the CRC. (The current rate is \$34.00 per night, but the rates are supposed to go up in August. If this is not authorized on your travel orders, you may not get reimbursed.) While the Fort Bliss Inn is more private than the open bay barracks at CRC, you will spend time getting back and forth from the Fort Bliss Inn to the CRC for mandatory formations. And if schedule changes occur, you may not get the information in a timely manner. I do not recommend it during deployment process.
- * The CRC has washers and dryers available at no cost.
- * Check out your equipment from Central Issue Facility
- * Employees will have to pay for meals at the CRC. (If the travel orders indicate no per diem, employees can get meals at no cost.)
- * Employees with a beard will have to shave before the gas mask fitting which is normally on Tuesday. Three of us waited till the last minute to take care of this.

An employee will have to spend 2 or 3 days at Fort Bliss for out processing.

A view from down range: SSgt. Bonnie Smith

Article and photo by Nola Conway



When the rocket-propelled grenades hit the hotel some of the members of Team-RIO (Restore Iraqi Oil) were staying in, SSgt. Bonnie Smith's voice could be heard above the confusion, accounting for team members and directing them to a safe location.

"I heard the first explosion and immediately put my uniform pants on. There was glass on the floor in my room and I walked through it, jumped into my boots, grabbed my flak vest, Kevlar and M-16 and went to the hallway to check to see who was hurt," Smith said.

To her amazement, no one was seriously injured. But team members were obviously shaken and she quickly moved them out of the damaged area and into a hallway that was protected by several concrete walls.

Smith and Capt. John Connor, Tulsa District, assessed the situation and made their way on foot to a military post within a few blocks to report the attack and request assistance. They made their way back to the hotel where Smith finally got an opportunity to take her boots off and discovered she had glass in her foot.

The RPGs had hit a water tank, a storeroom and the front of the hotel. Most of the windows had shattered. Team members were moved to nearby Kirkuk Air Force Base.

"I feel very safe when I am with SSgt. Smith. I went right for her door after the last grenade hit. I would do anything she told me to do, and I did that morning. I just went on cruise control and she took great care of us," said Pam Sisler, administrative officer, Fort Worth District.

Smith arrived in Kuwait in April after being called to active duty in March. A resident of Indianapolis, Indiana, she is employed with Pinkerton Security and Investigative Services at the GM Plant Indianapolis Metal Fabricating Center. Her Army Reserve assignment is as an Individual Mobilization Augmentee to USACE Headquarters in Washington.

She served 12 years on active duty and has a total of 17 years with her reserve time. Her Army active duty tour was scheduled to end in December 2002, but she was involuntary extended but her career field is one the Army needs – military police.

After Sept. 11, she was called to active duty to assist the Corps in assessing security sites. When the call came to assist the Corps with Operation Iraqi Freedom, she believed her assignment would be at the headquarters building in Washington, DC. To her surprise, it ended up being Iraq.

"I enjoy working with the Corps and really like being part of Team-RIO. I really didn't feel like I was earning my combat patch until the RPG attack – I earned it that day and will wear it proudly," she said.

Smith said that this has been a wonderful experience for her.

"You miss your family and friends, but this deployment has its upside, too. You have these people that came together, most who didn't know each other. We have bonded together – the Corps, our contractors from Kellogg, Brown and Root, and the Iraqis. I've made some new friends and I am learning about a culture that is new to me," she said.

When she isn't providing security for Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, Southwestern Division commander and Team-RIO, she has gotten an opportunity to support other missions.

"I have really enjoyed working with the explosive ordnance experts. I've learned a lot that has been very helpful to me in providing force protection. I wish I would have had this opportunity earlier in my career," she said.

In her spare time at home she enjoys fishing, camping and hanging out with her husband Edward and three children, Richard, Christina and Edward II.

"My son Richard is going into the Army this month and he has chosen to be a combat engineer. We definitely will have a lot to talk about. He wants me in the worst way to be at his graduation from the advance training course in October, in uniform with my Corps' of Engineers combat patch. I hope to make it," she said. Smith is due to leave Team-RIO in October.

"HOOAH!!"

*MICHAEL L. SCHULTZ, COLONEL, EN
Acting Commander,
Southwestern Division*